

WHO WROTE THE NEW TESTAMENT.

"The salutation of me Paul, with mine own hand: which is the token in every epistle—so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."—2 THESS. 3: 17.

RELIGION rests not on dogmas, but on a number of great facts. In the last Tract we found one of these to be, that people destitute of a revelation of God's will, ever have been, and now are ignorant, miserable and wicked. If it were at all needful, we might go on to show, that there are people in the world, who have decent clothing and comfortable houses—work well-tilled farms with sub-soil ploughs and McCormick reapers—yoke powerful streams to the mill wheel, and harness the iron horse to the market wagon—eareer their floating palaces up the opposing floods—line their coasts with flocks of white winged schooners, and show their flags on every coast of earth—invent and make every thing that man will buy, from the brass button, dear to the barbarian, to the folio of the philosopher—erect churches in all their towns, schools in every village—make their blacksmiths more learned than the priests of Egypt, their Sabbath scholars wiser than the philosophers of Greece, and even the criminals in their jails, more decent characters than the sages, heroes, and gods of the lands without the Bible; and that these people are the people who possess a Book, which they think contains a revelation from God, teaching them how to live well—which Book they call the Bible. This is the book about which we make our present inquiry, Who wrote it?

The fact being utterly undeniable, that these blessings are found among the people who possess the Bible, and only among them, we at once, and summarily, dismiss the arrogant falsehood presented to prevent any inquiry about the Book, namely, that "Christianity is just like any other superstition, and its saered books like the impositions of Chinese, Indian, or Mohammedan impostors. They too are religious, and have their sacred books which they believe to be divine." A profound generalization indeed! Is a peach tree just like a horse-chesnut, or a scrub-oak, or a honey-locust? They are all trees, and have leaves on them. The Bible is just as like the Yi King, or the Vedas, or the Koran,

as a Christian American or Briton is like a Chinaman, a Turk, or a Hindu. But it is too absurd to begin any discussion with these learned Thebans of the relative merits of the Bible as compared with the Vedas, and the Chinese Classics, of which they have never read a single page. Let them stick to what they pretend to know.

The Bible is a great fact in the world's history, known alike to the prince and the peasant, the simple and the sage. It is perused with pleasure by the child, and pondered with patience by the philosopher. Its psalms are caroled on the school green, cheer the chamber of sickness, are chanted by the mother over her cradle, by the orphan over the tomb. Here—thousands of miles away from the land of its birth—in a world undiscovered for centuries after it was finished, in a language unknown alike at Athens and Jerusalem, it rules as lovingly and as powerfully as in its native soil. To show that its power is not derived from race or clime, it converts the Sandwich Islands into a civilized nation, and transforms the New Zealand cannibal into a British ship-owner, the Indian warrior into an American Editor, and the Negro slave into the President of a free African Republic. It does not look as if it had finished its course and ceased from its triumphs. Translated into the hundred and fifty languages spoken by nine hundred millions of men, carried by ten thousand heralds to every corner of the globe, sustained by the cheerful contributions and fervent prayers of hundreds of thousands of ardent disciples, it is still going forth conquering and to conquer. Is there any other book so generally read, so greatly loved, so zealously propagated, so widely diffused, so uniform in its results, and so powerful and blessed in its influences? Do you know any? If you can not name any book, no, nor any thousand books, which in these respects equal the Bible,—then it stands out clear and distinct, and separate from all other authorship; and with an increased emphasis comes our question: Who wrote it?

With all these palpable facts in view, to come to the examination of this question as if we knew nothing about them, or as if knowing them well, we cared nothing at all about them, and were determined to deny them their natural influence in begetting within us a very strong presumption in favor of its divine origin, were to declare that our heads and hearts were alike closed against

light and love. But to enter on this inquiry into the origin of the Book which has produced such results, with a preconceived opinion that it must be a forgery and an imposition, the fruit of a depraved heart and a lying tongue, implies so much home-born deceit, that till the heart capable of such a prejudice be completely changed, no reasoning can have any solid fulcrum of truth or goodness to rest on. It is sheer folly to talk of one's being wholly unprejudiced in such an inquiry. No man ever was or could be so. As his sympathies are towards goodness and virtue, and the happiness of mankind, or towards pride and deceit, and selfishness, and savageness, so will his prejudices be for or against the Bible.

On looking at the Bible, we find it composed of a number of separate treatises, written by different writers, at various times; some parts fifteen hundred years before the others. We find, also, that it treats of the very beginning of the world before man was made, and of other matters of which we have no other authentic history to compare with it. Again, we find portions which treat of events connected in a thousand places with the affairs of the Roman Empire, of which we have several credible histories. Now, there are two modes of investigation open to us, the dogmatic and the inductive. We may take either. We may construct for ourselves, from the most flimsy suppositions, a metaphysical balloon, inflated with self-conceit into the rotundity of a cosmogony, according to which, in our opinion, the world should have been made, and we may paint it over with the figures of the various animals and noble savages which ought to have sprung up out of its fornea, and we may stripe its history to suit our notions of the progress of such a world, and soaring high into the clouds, after a little preliminary amusement in the discovery of eternal red hot fire-mists and condensing comets, and so forth, we may come down upon the summit of some of this earth's mountains, say Ararat, and take a survey of the Bible process of world making. Finding that the Creator of the world had to make his materials—a business in which no other world maker ever did engage—and further, that God's plan of making it by no means corresponds to our patent process, and that the article is not at all like what we intend to produce when we go into the business, and that it does not work according to our expectations, we can denounce the

whole as a very mean affair, and the Book which describes it as not worth reading. If one wants some new subject for merriment, and does not mind making a fool of himself, and is not to be terrified by old-fashioned notions about God Almighty, and is perfectly confident that God can tell him nothing that he does not know better already, and merely wants to see whether he is not trying to pass off old fables upon wide awake people for facts—this dogmatical plan will suit him.

On the other hand, if one is tolerably convinced that he does not know every thing, and probably not much of the world he lives in, less of its history, and nothing at all about the best way of making it, and that when it needs mending it will not be sent to his workshop—that he knows nothing about what happened before he was born unless what other people tell him, and that, though men do err, yet all men are not liars—that all the blessings of education, civilization, law and liberty, from the penny primer to the Constitution of the United States, came to him solely through the channel of abundant, reliable testimony—that the only way in which he can ever know any thing beyond his eyesight with certainty, is to gather testimony about it, and compare the evidence, and enquire into the character of the witnesses—that when one has done so, he becomes so satisfied of the truth of the report that he would rather risk his life upon it than upon the certainty of any mathematical problem, or of any scientific truth, whatever—that ninety-nine out of every hundred citizens of the United States are a thousand times more certain that the Yankees whipped the British in 1776, declared the Colonies free and independent States, and made Washington President, than they ever will be that all bodies attract each other directly as their mass, and inversely as the squares of their distances, that the sum of the angles of any triangle is equal to two right angles, or that the earth is nearer the sun in winter than in summer—that certainty about the Bible History is just as attainable and just as reliable as certainty about American history, if he will seek it in the same way—and if he is really desirous to know how this Book was written, which alone in the world teaches men how to obtain peace with God, how to live well, and how to die with a firm and joyful hope of a resurrection to life eternal, and what part of it is easiest to prove either true or false—then he will take the inductive mode. He will begin at the present

time, and trace the history up to the times in which the Book was written. He will ascertain what he can about that part of it which was last written—the New Testament—and begin with that part of it which lies nearest him—the Epistles. By the comparison of the documents themselves, with all kinds of history and monuments which throw light on the period, he will try to ascertain whether they are genuine or not. And from one well ascertained position he will proceed to another, until he has traversed the whole ground of the genuineness of the writings, the truth of the story, and the divine authority of the doctrine.

This is my plan of investigation. One thing at a time, and the nearest first. It is not worth while to inquire whether it be inspired by God, if it be really a forgery of impostors—nor whether the Gospel story is worthy of credit, if the only book which contains it be a religious novel of the third or fourth century? We dismiss then the questions of the Inspiration, or even the truth of the New Testament, till we have ascertained its authors. We take up the Book, and find that it purports to be a relation of the planting of the Church of Christ, of its laws and ordinances, and of the life, death and resurrection of its Founder, written by eight of his companions, at various periods and places, towards the close of the first century. There is a general opinion among all Christians that the Book was composed then, and by these persons. We want to know why they think so? In short, is it a genuine book, or merely a collection of myths with the apostles' names appended to them by some lying monks? Is it a fact, or a forgery?

In any historical inquiry, we want some fixed point of time from which to take our departure; and in this case we want to know if there is any period of antiquity in which undeniably this Book was in existence, and received as genuine by Christian societies. For I will not suppose my readers as ignorant as some of those infidels who allege that it was made by the Bible Society. It used to be the fashion with those of them who pretended to learning, to affirm that it was made by the Council of Laodicea, in A. D. 364; because, in order to guard the churches against spurious epistles and gospels, that Council published a list of those which the apostles did actually write, which thenceforth were generally bound in one volume.

Before that time, the four gospels were always bound in one volume and called the Gospel. The Acts of the Apostles and the

Epistles universally and undoubtedly known to be written by Paul, to the Churches of Thessalonica, Galatia, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and to Philemon, a well known resident of that city—and those to Timothy and Titus, missionaries of world-wide celebrity—the First General Epistle of Peter, and the First General Epistle of John, which were at once widely circulated to check prevailing heresies—were bound in another volume and called “The Apostle.” The Epistle to the Hebrews, being general, and anonymous, *i. e.*, not bearing the name of any particular church, or person, to whom any body who merely looked at it could refer for proof of its genuineness, as in the case of the other Epistles—was not so soon known by the European churches to be written by Paul. The General Epistles of James, Jude, and the Second General Epistle of Peter, lying under the same difficulty, and besides being very disagreeable to easy going Christians from their sharp rebukes of hypocrisy—the Second and Third Epistles of John, from their brevity—and the Revelation of John, being one of the last written of all the books of the New Testament, and the most mysterious—were not so generally known beyond the churches where the originals were deposited, until the other two collections had been formed. They were accordingly kept as separate books, and sometimes bound up in a third volume of Apostolical writings. Besides these, at the time of the Council of Laodicea, and for a long time before, other books written by Barnabas, Clement, Polycarp, and other companions and disciples of the apostles, and forged gospels and epistles attributed by heretics to the apostles, were circulated through the churches, and read by Christians. The Council of Laodicea did, what many learned men had done before them; it investigated the evidence upon which any of these books was attributed to an apostle—and finding evidence to satisfy them, that the gospel written by Luke had the sanction of the apostle Paul, that the gospel of Mark was revised by the apostle Peter, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul, and the other epistles by John, Jude, James, and Peter, respectively, and, not finding evidence to satisfy them about the Revelation of John, they expressed their opinion, and the grounds of it, for the information of the world.* Into these reasons we will hereafter inquire, for our faith in Holy Scripture does not rest

* Acta Coneil, sub voce Laodicea, Canon iv. Lardner vi.: p. 368.

on their canons. We are not now asking what they *thought* but what they *did*, and we find that they did criticise certain books, reported to be written by the apostles of Jesus Christ some three hundred years before, approve some, and reject others as spurious, and publish a list of those they thought genuine. Infidels admit this, and on the strength of it long asserted that the Council of Laodicea made the New Testament. At length they became ashamed of the stupid absurdity of alleging that men could criticise the claims, and catalogue the names of books before they were written ; and they now shift back the writing—or the authentication of the New Testament—for they are not quite sure which, though the majority incline to the former—to the Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nice, which met in the year 325. Why they have fixed on the Council of Nice is more than I can tell. They might as well say the Council of Trent, or the Westminster Assembly, either of which had just as much to do with the Canon of Scripture. However, on some vague hearsay that the Council of Nice and the Emperor Constantine made the Bible, hundreds in this city are now risking the salvation of their souls.

We have in this assertion, nevertheless, as many facts admitted as will serve our present purpose. There did exist, then, undeniably, in the year 325, large numbers of Christian churches in the Roman Empire, sufficiently numerous to make it politic, in the opinion of infidels, for a candidate for the empire to profess Christianity ; sufficiently powerful to secure his success, notwithstanding the desperate struggles of the heathen party ; and sufficiently religious, or if you like superstitious, to make it politic for an emperor and his politicians to give up the senate, the court, the camp, the chase and the theater, and weary themselves with long prayers and longer speeches of preachers about Bible religion. Now that is certainly a remarkable fact, and all the more remarkable if we now inquire, How came it so ? For these men, preachers, prince, and people, were brought up to worship Jupiter and the thirty thousand gods of Olympus, after the heathen fashion, and leave the care of religion to heathen priests, who never troubled their heads about books or doctrines after they had offered their sacrifices. In all the records of the world, there is no instance of a general council of heathen priests to settle the religion of their people. How happens it then that the human race

has of a sudden waked up to such a strange sense of the folly of idolatry and the value of religion? The Council of Nice and the Emperor Constantine and his councilors making a Bible, is a proof of a wonderful revolution in the world's religion—a phenomenon far more surprising than if the Secretaries of State, and the Senate, and President Pierce, should leave the Capitol and post off to Boston, to attend the meetings of a Methodist Conference assembled to make a Hymn Book. Now what is the cause of this remarkable conversion of prince, priests, and people? How did they all get religion? How did they get it so suddenly? How did they get so much of it?

The infidel gives no answer, except to tell us* that the austerity, purity and zeal of the first Christians, their good discipline, their belief in the resurrection of the body and the general judgment, and their persuasion that Christ and his apostles wrought miracles, had made a great many converts. This is just as if I inquired how a great fire originated, and you should tell me that it burned fast because it was very hot. What I want to know is, how it happened that these licentious Greeks, and Romans, and Asiatics, became austere and pure—how these frivolous philosophers suddenly became so zealous about religion—what implanted the belief of the resurrection of the body and of the judgment to come in the sceptical minds of these heathen scoffers—and how did the pagans of Italy, Egypt, Spain, Germany, Britain, come to believe in the miracles of one who lived hundreds of years before, and thousands of miles away, or to care a straw whether the written accounts of them were true or false? According to the infidel account, the Council of Nice and the Emperor Constantine's Bible-making, is a most extraordinary business—a phenomenon without any natural cause, and they will allow no supernatural—a greater miracle than any recorded in the Bible.

If we inquire, however, of the parties attending that Council, what the state of the case is, we shall learn that they believed—whether truly or erroneously we are not now inquiring—but they believed that a teacher sent from God, had appeared in Palestine two hundred and ninety years before, and had taught this religion which they had embraced; had performed wonderful miracles, such as opening the eyes of the blind, healing lepers, raising the

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Chap. "v.

dead; that he had been put to death by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, and had risen again from the dead, and had spoken to hundreds of people, and gone out and in among them for six weeks after his resurrection; that he had ascended up through the air to heaven in the sight of numbers of witnesses, and had promised that he would come again in the clouds of heaven to raise the dead, and judge every man according to his works; that before he went away he appointed twelve of his intimate companions to teach his religion to the world, giving them power to work miracles in proof of their divine commission, and requiring mankind to hear them as they would hear him; that they and their followers did so, in spite of persecutions, sufferings, and death, with so much success, that immense numbers were persuaded to give up idolatry and its filthiness, and profess Christianity and its holiness, and brave the fury of the heathen mob, and the vengeance of the Roman law—that a difference of opinion having arisen among them as to whether this teacher was an angel from heaven, or God; whether they should pray and sing the Psalms to him as Athanasius and his party believed, or only give him some lesser honor as Arius and his party believed—and this difference making all the difference between idolatry on the one hand and impiety on the other, and so involving their everlasting salvation or damnation—they had embraced the first opportunity after the cessation of persecution, and the accession of the first Christian Emperor, to assemble three hundred and eighteen of their most learned clergymen, of both sides, and from all countries between Spain and Persia, to discuss these solemn questions; and that, through the whole of the discussions, both sides appealed to the writings of the Apostles, as being then well known, and of unquestioned authority with every one who held the Christian name. These facts being utterly indisputable, are acknowledged by all persons, infidel or Christian, at all acquainted with history *.

Here then we have the books of the New Testament at the Council of Nice well known to the whole world; and the Council, so far from *giving* any authority to them, *bowing to theirs*,—both

* The original authorities may be found collected in the 4th vol. of Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History. Abstracts of them, with ample references, in Mosheim and Neander's Ecclesiastical Histories.

Arian and Orthodox with one consent acknowledging that the whole Christian world received them as the writings of the Apostles of Christ. There were venerable men of fourscore and ten at that Council; if these books had been first introduced in their lifetime, they must have known it. There were men there whose parents had heard the Scriptures read in church from their childhood, and so could not be imposed upon with a new Bible. The New Testament could not be less than three generations old, else one or other of the disputants would have exposed the novelty of its introduction, from his own information. The Council of Nice then, did not make the New Testament. It was a book well known, ancient, and of undoubted authority among all Christians, ages before that Council. *The existence of New Testament Scriptures then, ages before the Council of Nice, is a Great Fact.*

We next take up the assertions, propounded with a show of learning, that the books of the New Testament, and especially the gospels, were not in use, and were not known till the third century; that they are not the productions of contemporary writers; that the alleged ocular testimony or proximity in point of time of the sacred historians to the events recorded is mere assumption, originating in the titles which Biblical books bear in our canon; that we stand here (in the gospel history), upon purely mythical and poetical ground; and that the gospels and epistles are a gradually formed collection of myths, having little or no historic reality. So Strauss, Eichorn, DeWette, and their disciples here, attempt to set aside the New Testament. In plain English, it is a collection of forgeries.

Now we might easily show that these assertions are absurd; that in the hundred years between the death of the last of the Apostles, and the beginning of the third century, there was not time to form a mythology; that the times of Trajan's persecution, and that of the philosophic Aurelius and the busy bustling age of Severus, were not the times for such a business; that bigoted Jews would not and could not have made such a character as Jesus of Nazareth--and the philosophers of that day, Celsus and Porphyry, for instance, hated it when presented to them, as heartily as either Strauss or Paine; and that there were not wanting thousands of enemies, able and willing, to expose such a forgery.

But we prefer the direct course of proving these assertions false, and we will draw the proof from enemies. It is an undeniable

fact that in the close of the second century, Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, wrote a work against Christianity, entitled, "The Word of Truth," in which he quotes passages from the New Testament, and so many of them, that from the fragments of his work which remain, we could gather all the principal facts of the birth, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, if the New Testament should be lost. If Paine quotes the New Testament to ridicule it, no man can deny that such a book was in existence at the time he wrote. If he takes the pains to write a book to confute it, it is self-evident that it is in circulation, and possessed of influence. So Celsus' attempt to reply to the gospels, and his quotations from them, are conclusive proofs that these books were generally circulated and believed, and held to be of authority at the time he wrote. Further, he shows every disposition to present every argument which could possibly damage the Christian cause. In fact, our modern infidels have done little more than serve up his old objections. Now nothing could have served his purpose better than to prove that the records of the history of Christ were forgeries of a late date. This would have saved him all further trouble, and settled the fate of Christianity conclusively. He had every opportunity of ascertaining the fact, living as he did so near the times and scenes of the gospel history, and surrounded by heretics and false Christians, who would gladly have given him every information. But he never once intimates the least suspicion of such a thing—never questions the gospels as books of history—nor denies the miracles recorded in them, but attributes them to magic.* Here, then, we have testimony as acceptable to an infidel as that of Strauss or Voltaire—in fact, utterly undeniable by any man of common sense—that the New Testament was well known and generally received by Christians as authoritative, when Celsus wrote his reply to it, in the end of the second century. If it was a forgery, it was undoubtedly a forgery of old standing, if he could not detect it.

But we will go back a step farther, and prove the antiquity of the New Testament by the testimony of another enemy, two generations older than Celsus. The celebrated heretic, Marcion, lived in the beginning of the second century, when he had the best opportunity of discovering a forgery in the writings of the

* Origen *Contra Celsum*, *passim*.

New Testament, if any such existed; he was excommunicated by the church, and being greatly enraged thereat, had every disposition to say the worst he could about it. He traveled all the way from Sinope on the Black Sea, to Rome, and through Galatia, Bithynia, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, the countries where the Apostles preached, and the churches to which they wrote, but never found any one to suggest the idea of a forgery to him. He affirmed that the gospel of Matthew, the epistle to the Hebrews, those of James and Peter, and the whole of the Old Testament, were books only for Jews, and published a new and altered edition of the gospel of Luke and ten epistles of Paul, for the use of his sect.* We have thus the most undoubted evidence, even the testimony of an enemy, that these books were in existence, and generally received as apostolical and authoritative by Christians, at the beginning of the second century, or within twenty years of the last of the Apostles, and by the churches to which they had preached and written.

The only remaining conceivable cavil against the genuineness of the books of the New Testament is: "That they bear internal evidence of being collections of fragments written by different persons,—and are probably merely traditions committed to writing by various unknown writers, and afterwards collected and issued to the churches under the names of the Apostles, for the sake of greater authority." This theory being received as gospel by several learned men, has furnished matter for lengthy discussions as to the sources of the four gospels. Translated into English, it amounts to this, that Brown, Smith, White, and Jones, wrote out a number of essays and anecdotes, and persuaded the churches of Ephesus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, and the rest, to receive them as the writings of their ministers, who had lived for years, or were then living among them; and on the strength of that notion of their being the writings of the Apostles, to govern their whole lives by these essays, and lay down their lives and peril their souls' salvation on the truth of these anecdotes. As though they could not tell whether such documents were forgeries or not!

It is almost incredible how ignorant dreaming book-worms are of the common business of life. Most of my readers will laugh at the idea of a serious answer to such a quibble. Nevertheless,

* Lardner, vol. ix, p. 358.

for the sake of those whose inexperience may be abused by the authority of learned names, I will show them that the primitive Christians, supposing them able to read, could know whether their ministers did really write the books and letters which they received from them.

If you go into the Citizens' Bank, you will find a large folio volume lying on the counter, and on looking at it you will see that it is filled with men's names in their own handwriting, and that no two of them are exactly alike. Every person who has any business to transact with the bank is requested to write his name in the book; and when his check comes afterward for payment, the clerk can tell at a glance if the signature is the same as that of which he has a single specimen. If there has been no opportunity for him to become personally acquainted with the bank, as in case of a foreigner newly arrived, he brings letters of introduction from some well known mutual friend, or is accompanied by some respectable citizen, who attests his identity. Business men have no difficulty whatever in ascertaining the genuineness of documents. It is only when people want to dispute Holy Scripture that they give up common sense.

Holy Scripture was known to be the genuine writing of the Apostles, just in the same way as any other writing was known to be genuine, only the churches who received the writings of the Apostles had ten thousand times better security against forgery than any bank in the Union. In one of the first letters Paul writes to the churches—the second letter to the Thessalonians—to whom he had been preaching only a few weeks before, sent from Athens, distant only some two days' journey, full of allusions to their affairs, commands how to conduct themselves in the business of their workshops, as well as in the devotions of the church, and explanations of some misunderstood parts of a former letter sent by the hand of a mutual friend—he formally gives them his signature, for the purpose of future reference, and comparison of any document which might purport to come from him, with that specimen of his autograph. He gives not the name merely, but his apostolic benediction also, in his own handwriting: *The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* It shows the heart of an Apostle of Christ; but what concerns the present question is the remark, which every

business man will in a moment appreciate, how immensely the addition of these two lines adds to the security against forgery. It is a very hard thing to forge a signature, but give a business man two lines of any man's writing besides that, and he is perfectly secure against imposition.

The churches to which the epistles were written, and to which the gospels were delivered, consisted largely of business men, of merchants and traders, tent makers and coppersmiths, city chamberlains, and officers of Cæsar's household, and the like. Does any one think such men could not tell the handwriting of their minister, who had lived among them for years; or that men who were risking their lives for the instructions he wrote them, would care less about the genuineness of the documents, than you do about the genuineness of a ten dollar check? I am not as long in this city as Paul was in Ephesus, nor one-fourth of the time that John lived there, yet I defy all the advocates of the mythical theory in Germany, and all their disciples here, to write a myth half as long as this tract, and impose it on the elders and members of my church as my writing. Let it only be presented in manuscript to the congregation—there was no printing in Paul's days—and in five minutes a dozen members of the church will detect the forgery, even if I should hold my peace. And were I to leave on a mission to China or India, and write letters to the church, would any of these business men, who have seen my writing, have the least hesitation in recognizing it again? Do you think any body could forge a letter as from me, and impose it on them? What an absurdity, then, to suppose that any body could write a gospel or epistle, and just get all the members of a large church to believe that an Apostle wrote it! The first Christians, then, were absolutely certain that the documents which they received as apostolic, were really so. The Church of Rome could attest the epistle to them, and the gospels of Mark and Luke written there. The Church of Ephesus could attest the epistle to them, and the gospel, and letters, and Revelation of John written there. And so on of all the other churches; and these veritable autographs were long preserved. Says Tertullian, who was ordained A. D. 192: "Well, if you be willing to exercise your curiosity profitably in the business of your salvation, visit the apostolical churches in which the very chairs of the Apostles still preside—in which their authentic letters themselves are recited, (*apud quæ ipsæ authenticae literæ*

eorum recitantur,) sounding forth the voice and representing the countenance of each one of them. Is Achaia near you, you have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have Thessalonica. If you can go to Asia, you have Ephesus; but if you are near to Italy, you have Rome."* There can not be the least doubt about the preservation of documents for a far longer time than from Paul to Tertullian—one hundred and fifty years. I hold in my hand a Bible, the family Bible of the Gibsons—printed in 1599—two hundred and fifty-seven years old, in perfect preservation.

The only difficulty which now remains is the objection, that they might have been corrupted by alterations, and interpolations by monks in later times. We have two securities against such corruptions in the way these documents were given, and the nature of their contents. They were sacred heirlooms, and they were public documents. Could you, or could any man, have permission to alter the original copy of Washington's Farewell Address? Would not the man who should attempt such sacrilege be torn in a thousand pieces? But Washington will never be an object of such veneration as John, nor will his Farewell Address ever compare in importance with Paul's Farewell Letter to the Philippians. Besides, these gospels and letters were public documents, containing the records of laws, in obedience to which men were daily crossing their inclinations, enduring the mockery of their neighbors, losing their money, and endangering their lives. They contained the proofs and promises of that religious faith in God and hope of heaven, for the sake of which they suffered such things. Is it credible that they would allow them to be altered and corrupted? You might far more rationally talk of some southern politician altering the Declaration of Independence, or some northern man altering the Constitution of the United States. Translated into different languages—transported into Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Carthage, Egypt, Parthia, Persia, India, and China—committed to memory by children, and quoted in the writings of Christian authors of the first three centuries, to such an extent, that we can gather the whole of the New Testament, except twenty-six verses, from their writings—appealed to as authority by heretics and orthodox in controversy—and publicly

* Tertullian De Præscript, cap. 36.

read in the hearing of tens of hundreds of thousands every Sabbath day in worship—we are a thousand times more certain that the New Testament has not been corrupted, than we are that the Declaration of Independence is genuine.

On this ground then we plant ourselves. The whole story of a late and gradual formation of the New Testament, or, in plain English, of its forgery, stands out as an unmitigated falsehood in the eyes of every man capable of writing his own name. The first churches could not be deceived with forgeries for apostolic writings. Nor could they, if they would, allow these writings to be corrupted. Be they true or false, fact or fiction, the books of the New Testament are the words of the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the next Tract we will inquire into the truth of their story.



NOTICE.

March, 1857.

The American Reform Tract and Book Society is progressing in efforts to spread Truth and Godliness, and promote action on all great moral questions, and more especially, the great question of Freedom and Slavery. More than twenty Tracts, and a dozen books, have been published. Arrangements are made for increasing this number just as fast as funds are provided.

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